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NEWS RELEASE

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CHICO MAN INDICTED AND ARRESTED IN SCHEME TO UNLAWFULLY SMUGGLE PROTECTED TORTOISES INTO THE UNITED STATES

SACRAMENTO-- United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today the arrest of GARRETT SMITH, age 39, of Chico, California, and the unsealing of an indictment against SMITH and an unknown international conspirator, known as "Turtle Man," charging each with a variety of wildlife smuggling charges. The twenty-one count indictment charges both defendants with conspiracy, smuggling protected tortoises, false labeling of wildlife, unlawful sale of wildlife, and money laundering; it also charges defendant SMITH with one count of destruction or removal of property to prevent seizure during execution of a search warrant.

This case is the product of an extensive investigation by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to Assistant United States Attorney S. Robert Tice-Raskin, who is prosecuting the case, defendant SMITH, working in concert with an unknown conspirator known as "Turtle Man," believed to reside in Singapore, engaged in a conspiracy to illegally obtain wild tortoises protected under international and United States law and smuggle the same into the United States for sale. According to the indictment, the overseas conspirator and others acting at his direction obtained wild tortoises in Asia, specifically Burmese Star Tortoises and Indian Star Tortoises, that were protected under an International Treaty known as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and sold

such species to defendant SMITH in the Eastern District of California ordinarily by means of e-mail transactions. Defendants unlawfully imported these tortoises into the United States using misleading labels and without required licenses or documentation. Defendant SMITH then sold and distributed the tortoises to distributors and customers located throughout the United States. In total, defendants caused the unlawful importation of 30 protected Indian Star Tortoises and five protected Burmese Star Tortoises.

Defendant SMITH made his initial appearance today before the Hon. Magistrate Judge Gregory G. Hollows where he was arraigned on the charges and released on bail. The matter is set for a further status conference on February 12, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. before Senior United States Judge Lawrence K. Karlton.

The maximum statutory penalty for conspiracy, false labeling of wildlife, unlawful sale of wildlife and destruction of property to prevent seizure is five years, per count. The maximum penalty for smuggling and money laundering is 20 years, per count. However, the actual sentence will be dictated by the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of factors, and will be imposed at the discretion of the court.

In a separate case recently brought in the Eastern District of California, a federal grand jury returned an indictment on December 12, 2007, charging NORMAN FRANCISCO PONFERRADA, 33, of Davis, California, with attempting to sell and offering to sell a red tail gold Asian arowana fish, a species protected by the Endangered Species Act.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Samuel Wong, who is prosecuting that case, defendant PONFERRADA was arraigned on the two count indictment on January 7, 2008. The maximum penalty on the attempted sale charge is five years in prison, and on the offer to sell charge is one year in prison. However, the actual sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables, and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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